

B R E S H N A FOUNDATION FOR CULTURE



Abdul Ghafur Breshna – Self-portrait, 1970, oil on canvas

2023 | 2024

FOREWORD

The year 2023/24 marked a series of important cultural milestones for our foundation. Thanks to your support, we were able to realize key projects and make a meaningful contribution to the promotion of Afghan art and culture.

One of the major highlights was our participation in the exhibition Stuttgart – Afghanistan at the Linden Museum Stuttgart, which offered a significant opportunity to honor the legacy of Abdul Ghafur Brechna/Breshna on the 50th anniversary of his passing. The accompanying theme day and the publication in the exhibition catalog enabled deeper engagement with Breshna’s work and his lasting impact on the history of Afghan art.

Another central focus was the advancement of our archive, the digitization of valuable works, and the preparation of our new website – a future hub for research, education, and international exchange.

In this report, we offer an overview of our activities and accomplishments over the past two years. These developments illustrate how the Breshna Foundation for Culture evolved in the areas of exhibition, events, and archival work in 2023/24.

These advances would not have been possible without the dedication of our partners and volunteers. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who support our mission and work with us toward preserving the cultural heritage of 20th-century Afghanistan.

With anticipation and commitment, we look forward to the year ahead and warmly invite you to continue accompanying and supporting our initiatives.

We hope: Together, we can shine a light on our cultural heritage, realize projects, and make education and outreach a reality!

Dr. Eng. Architect Zahra Breshna
Trustee and Chairwomen of “Breshna Foundation for Culture”

MISSION

The Breshna Foundation for Culture was founded in 2021 with the aim of preserving, researching, and making accessible the artistic and architectural heritage of 20th-century Afghanistan. The foundation is dedicated to fostering appreciation of Afghan art and culture and seeks to inspire especially younger generations—both in Afghanistan and within the Afghan diaspora—to engage actively with their cultural heritage.

The foundation draws upon a family legacy of over a century of cultural dedication, embodied in the lives and work of **Abdul Ghafur Brechna/Breshna** (1907–1974), a pioneering artist, composer, and playwright, and **Abdullah Breshna** (1933–2021), a prominent architect and urban planner.

Our work is guided by four core pillars:

Preserve: Archiving, documenting, and digitally cataloging artworks and architectural heritage.

Promote: Supporting emerging talent through scholarships, exhibitions, and cultural programming.

Pioneer: Developing interdisciplinary projects that connect the past and present with future-oriented perspectives.

Collaborate: Building international partnerships to strengthen intercultural dialogue.

Through exhibitions, publications, educational programs, and digital initiatives, the Breshna Foundation for Culture contributes to the long-term visibility and preservation of Afghanistan’s cultural legacy.

ABOUT US

Nonprofit Status:

The Breshna Foundation for Culture is a tax-registered, exclusively nonprofit organization serving charitable purposes.

Trustee/Chairwoman

Zahra Breshna was appointed as Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees by its benefactor, her father, Abdullah Breshna. Accordingly, she now presides over the Foundation’s affairs.

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has—so far—three permanent members: Zahra Breshna, (Chairwoman), Habib Breshna, and Jussof Breshna. They are the children of Abdullah Breshna and the surviving grandchildren of Abdul Ghafur Brechna.

Shaima Breshna, wife of the late lamented Abdullah Breshna, is an honorary member of the Board of Trustees.

Committees & Working Groups

Permanent committees will be appointed by the Board of Trustees to manage the Foundation’s Awards and Scholarship Program. Working groups will be convened temporarily, on an ad hoc basis, to address or carry out specific tasks and projects, e.g., to review the Board’s funding applications.

Sales Tax ID-Number DE 347853333

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HIGHLIGHTS 2024

EXHIBITION “STUTTGART – AFGHANISTAN”

January–May 2024, Linden-Museum Stuttgart

Select works by Abdul Ghafur Brechna were featured in the special exhibition *Stuttgart – Afghanistan* at the Linden Museum Stuttgart, which explored the historical and cultural connections between Afghanistan and Germany.

This exhibition offered a broad public audience fresh insights into Afghanistan’s modern history and emphasized the richness of its cultural heritage. As one of the most prominent Afghan artists of the 20th century, Brechna’s works were recontextualized within both Afghan and European art historical narratives.

The **Breshna Foundation for Culture** was honored to contribute to this project, which not only deepened historical understanding but also opened new perspectives on Afghan art history -a legacy that continues to resonate nearly a century after Brechna’s studies in Germany.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Linden Museum Stuttgart -especially Dr. Annette Krämer- and to all collaborators for the successful partnership.



Exhibition Magazine

In the publication **“Life and Work of Brechna,”** Dr. Annette Krämer documents his works in the exhibition and places them in a broader cultural-historical context. Dr. Krämer underscores the enduring significance of Brechna’s artistic heritage and the necessity for further research and engagement with his legacy (see pp. 104–120).



Impressions from the exhibition - Copyright: Linden Museum Stuttgart | Photo: Dominik Drasow

HIGHLIGHTS 2024

BRECHNA THEME DAY AT THE LINDEN MUSEUM

On April 21, 2024, the **Breshna Foundation for Culture, in collaboration with the Linden Museum**, dedicated a special day to honor the life and work of Abdul Ghafur Brechna.

The event began with an engaging curatorial tour of Brechna's works in the exhibition "Stuttgart – Afghanistan," led by **Dr. Annette Krämer**.

Prof. Dr. Inês de Castro, Director of the Linden Museum, opened the event with an insightful speech, emphasizing the importance of collaboration with the Breshna Foundation for Culture.

In the keynote lectures, participants gained insights into Brechna's diverse oeuvre, which extended far beyond painting. From art and music to radio, theater, and political caricature, Brechna left an indelible mark on Afghanistan's cultural landscape. Art historian **Nathalie Kreitz** highlighted Abdul Ghafur Brechna's role as a pioneer of Afghan modernity, while **Prof. Alam Farhad** examined Brechna's significance from historical and contemporary perspectives. Rubab master **Daud Khan Sadozai** concluded the evening with an impressive performance of **Brechna's compositions**.

Response

This special event provided a unique opportunity to deepen the understanding of Breshna's work and its significance in the broader context of Afghan and global art history.

"In Germany, Brechna – who exhibited in many countries – is still relatively unknown despite his great significance. As a person and artist, he represents, like few other intellectuals, the cultural connections and relationships between Afghanistan and Germany."

From the exhibition magazine "Stuttgart/Afghanistan" 2024 – by Dr. Annette Krämer



Impressions from the Brechna Theme Day - Copyright: Linden Museum Stuttgart | Photo: Dominik Drasow

AKTIVITIES 2023/24

ARCHIVAL WORK & DIGITIZATION (2023/24)



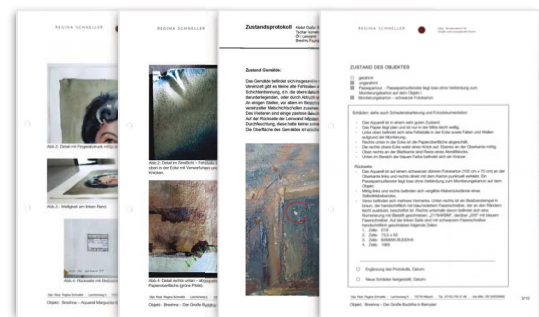
Selected artworks shown in the exhibition “Stuttgart – Afghanistan”



Selected artworks shown in the exhibition “Stuttgart – Afghanistan”

Restoration & Digitization

We thank Linden Museum Stuttgart for the digitization of nine additional paintings by Abdul Ghafur Brechna, as well as for the detailed condition assessments of his watercolors carried out by certified conservator Regine Scheller. The professional cleaning and repairs of an oil painting significantly contributed to the preservation of Brechna’s works.



Sample condition reports of the exhibited works

Academic Collaborations

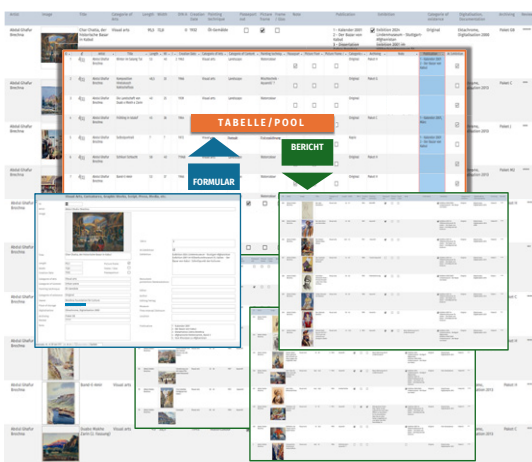
Several institutions and researchers contacted us regarding image rights. International scholars expressed interest in participating in academic and archival work relating to Abdullah Breshna. Discussions were held with the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and some institutions also in Afghanistan regarding documentation and research projects on Abdullah Breshna.

Collection and Evaluation

We began compiling a variety of Dari and Pashto content from social media and public events related to Brechna/Breshna.

Database

The systematic development of a digital collection was led by Benjamin Thiele to ensure the long-term documentation of artworks and historical materials.



Example view of the structure and interface of our archive database

AKTIVITIES 2023

COOPERATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS

In 2023, preparations for the 2024 commemorative year marking the 50th anniversary of Abdul Ghafur Brechna's death were at the center of our work. In close cooperation with partner institutions and experts, events were planned, research projects initiated, and new opportunities for collaboration developed.

Publication of the Main Report of the Breshna Foundation for Culture "2021/22"
The comprehensive report outlines the foundation's mission, objectives, responsibilities, and long-term programs. It serves as a strategic framework and reference for future reports and initiatives.

Website Development

The foundation's new website was developed, including blog articles that will serve as a central platform for research and international exchange.

Public Relations and Cultural Events

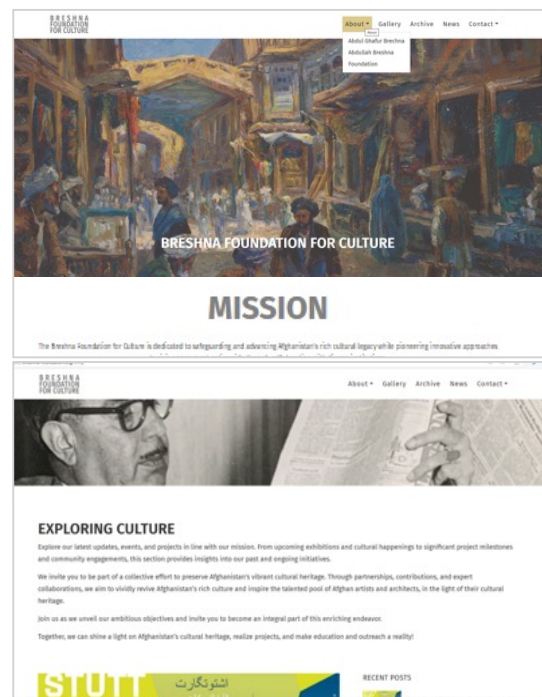
We organized panel discussions and networking events to raise awareness of Afghanistan's artistic heritage. This included speeches at cultural events, radio feature on SWR3, presentations, and discussions in Kabul.

"Abdul Ghafur Brechna worked during his time to create social awareness for art and to ensure that there can and must be female artists. Personally, Brechna stood and still stands for art as a necessity of life..."

From the exhibition magazine "Stuttgart/Afghanistan" 2024 – by Dr. Annette Krämer



Cover page of the 2021/22 Annual Report



Website excerpts of the Foundation (screenshot)

CHALLENGES & STRATEGIC GOALS

Despite our successes, the foundation faces a number of ongoing challenges:

Financial Resources

The lack of long-term funding is one of our greatest challenges. The foundation depends on international partnerships and grants to sustainably implement its projects.

Low Visibility / Language Barrier

Afghan art and culture — especially of the 20th century — are largely overlooked in international discourse. Language barriers further limit the foundation's global visibility and recognition. Multilingual communication (Dari, Pashto, English, German, etc.) requires considerable effort.

Education and Cultural Awareness

Many young Afghans have limited access to 20th-century cultural history. This threatens national cultural awareness and highlights the urgent need for targeted educational programs and digital platforms.

Lack of Specialists

There is a shortage of qualified professionals in Afghanistan for archiving, conservation, and digital cataloguing. International collaboration is therefore essential.

Unfortunately, access to cultural sites, archives, and artworks within Afghanistan remains difficult, and implementing projects entails logistical risks and obstacles.

Strategic Priorities

In light of these challenges, we remain committed to pursuing innovative approaches to fulfill our mission in the medium term.

International Cooperation and Funding Partnerships

Our priority is to expand funding partnerships and international collaborations in the fields of research, archiving, and digital infrastructure.

Public Relations & Online Engagement

To preserve cultural heritage, it is essential to raise international awareness of Afghan art and culture, particularly that of the 20th century.

Our strategy includes the expanded use of modern technologies and social media to promote global dialogue and increase visibility for the Breshna Foundation for Culture.

Reducing language barriers will also allow us to offer cultural education programs and interactive online courses in collaboration with partner institutions.

Your involvement is essential to achieving these goals. With your support, we can foster creative exchange and offer insights into the richness of Afghanistan's modern and contemporary art and culture.

FINANCES

In the interest of transparency and accountability, the foundation reports annually on all expenditures related to its activities, as well as on any donations, grants, or funds received.

For the year 2023/24, the foundation recorded no external income. Nevertheless, key projects — in particular our participation in the exhibition, the thematic day, and digitization initiatives in cooperation with the Linden Museum Stuttgart — were successfully implemented.

Privately funded expenditures by Dr. Zahra Breshna included:

- Improvement of archival infrastructure (e.g., A0 archival flat cabinets, high-resolution archival scanner, climate control for archive, security systems, etc.)
- Travel costs, conference participation fees, etc.
- Ongoing monthly costs e.g., for website hosting and digital infrastructure, etc.

BUDGET OUTLOOK 2025/26

The foundation remains committed to expanding its reach and improving access to art and culture for diverse audiences.

Through the acquisition of **new funding sources**, the development of strategic and **international partnerships**, and the further expansion of **digital programs**, we aim to ensure the long-term success of our initiatives.

CREDITS

Our sincere thanks go to all partners, contributors, and supporters who made our work in 2023/24 possible.

A special thanks goes to:

- **Dipl.-Ing. Benjamin Thiele**, for his voluntary support with archiving, database development, and bookkeeping
- The team of the **Linden Museum Stuttgart**, especially **Dr. Annette Krämer**, for the excellent collaboration on the exhibition and thematic day
- Our **families and friends**, who have stood by us with advice and encouragement – their support is invaluable

IMPRINT

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IMAGES

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Please notify us in advance by email at info@breshna-foundation.org

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